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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2017  
TAGS: PGOV PINR KDEM NI ELECTIONS  
SUBJECT: MAKARFI ON YAR'ADUA, ELECTIONS

Classified By: DCM Thomas P. Furey for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

¶1. (C) Deputy Chief of Mission and visiting AF/W Deputy Director Donald Heflin paid a January 24 courtesy call on Kaduna State Governor Ahmed Makarfi. Although previously considered the leading contender for the PDP presidential nomination, Makarfi is now weighing his options with his eyes on the Senate after he voluntarily "pulled out" ahead of the December PDP presidential primaries. Makarfi believes that Yar'Adua will capture 60% of the vote, though he remains skeptical Yar'Adua can beat All Nigeria Peoples' Party (ANPP) presidential aspirant Muhammadu Buhari in any geopolitical zone except the South-South, where he expects Yar'Adua to win by a landslide.

¶2. (C) Governor Ahmed Makarfi, who came to power in 1999 under the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) platform, is concluding his second term in office. When asked about the PDP's selection of Katsina State Governor Umaru Yar'Adua as the party's presidential flag-bearer, Makarfi stated that intense negotiations took place up until the December 19 primaries but that he was neither intimidated nor coerced to "pull out" of contention. However, he admitted that "of course this happened with others." Moreover, Makarfi anticipates the ANPP and Action Congress (AC) to merge and carry the North, South-West, and South-East geo-political zones.

¶3. (C) When asked about the sluggish pace of voter registration, Makarfi noted that 2.6 million Kaduna State residents had been registered, but that both he and Yar'Adua remain concerned and "suspicious" that the current elections timetable will hold. In spite of the disappointing tempo of voter registration, Makarfi stated that elections are threatened more by the looming specter of manipulation, through blackmail or intimidation, that surrounds Kaduna. He added that in a recent meeting with Democratic Peoples' Party (DPP) candidate Sokoto State Governor Attahiru Baifarawa, both agreed that the vast majority of the Nigerian political elite would not accept postponement of elections.

¶4. (C) With respect to Makarfi's future ambitions, he remarked that while he did not "choose" to pursue a Senate seat, he acknowledges that a Senate seat may be his best option, should a Cabinet appointment in Yar'Adua's government not come to pass.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Governor Ahmed Makarfi has been lauded for his efforts at stemming inter-communal violence in conflict-prone Kaduna State mainly through curfews and segregation buttressed by the substantial military presence

in the State. He is currently engaged in negotiations with the PDP. While he is considering a run for the Senate, other PDP National Assembly members from Kaduna State with whom we have spoken doubt his ability to win in Kaduna, given his unpopularity. Though not rewarded for his loyalty and ardent, vocal support for Obasanjo's third-term bid, Makarfi deems himself Yar'Adua's "closest" confidant and this will figure heavily in his own political relevance and influence in the PDP. END COMMENT.

CAMPBELL